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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 KUWAIT 001215

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: KUWAIT MEDIA REACTION, APRIL 2: WAR IN IRAQ; ARAB  
MEDIA

**1.** SUMMARY: Commentators call for moderation of the Kuwaiti rhetoric denouncing other Arab states that has dominated opinion over the last week, appealing to feelings of Pan-Arabism. However, frustrations remain keen, with reports that the Kuwaiti government has decided not to fund the Al-Arabiya station to protest what they perceive as the channel's biased coverage of the war. One commentator laments: "Arabism is more a daily curse than a way of life."

Support for the war remains high despite perceptions that the war is not going according to plan. One disillusioned commentator writes: "It is completely different from the war to liberate Iraq." Radical Islamist Mohammad al-Mulaifi outlines how US forces may be defeated in Baghdad after "the failure of the shock and awe campaign." In response to Iraqi regime promises of more suicide attacks, Kuwaiti Muslim scholars declare that defending the Baath regime is not Jihad, and that suicide bombers for the regime are not martyrs. END SUMMARY.

**2.** News Stories: Informed sources told Al-Qabas that Kuwait has decided not to provide funding for the Arabic satellite news channel Al-Arabiya to protest the channel's coverage of the war in Iraq. The UAE and Saudi Arabia, and Lebanese Prime Minister Al-Hariri currently fund Al-Arabiya.

All newspapers report the Dean of the College of Sharia and Islamic Affairs, Dr. Mohammed Al-Tabtabaie's statement that, "Fighting for the Iraqi Baath Party is not Jihad." Secretary-General of the Shiite Scholars in Kuwait, Mohammed

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Baqer Al-Mahri, declares that suicide bombers defending Saddam Hussein and his regime are not martyrs, all newspapers report.

Al-Qabas reports that Kuwaiti (Islamic) charity organizations are collecting donations for the Iraqi people to be administered under the Joint Kuwaiti Relief Committee, headed by Tareq Al-Essa, Chairman of the Kuwaiti Revival of Islamic Heritage Committee [The Afghan and Pakistani branches of the Committee were identified as providing financial support for terrorism in January 2003].

On March 31, all Arabic and English dailies carried extensive coverage of an Embassy-organized press briefing by USAID Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) experts on humanitarian aid to Iraq.

All newspapers front-page the attack by an Egyptian who drove a truck into a group of American soldiers outside Al-Udairi camp in Kuwait, injuring between 10-15 soldiers, on March 30.

A water pipeline from Kuwait to Umm Qasr was inaugurated on March 30, all newspapers report. The pipeline will provide Iraqis with 2,700,000 liters of clean drinking water per day.

All newspapers report Kuwait's expulsion of the Libyan Charge d'Affaires to protest the lack of serious action by the Libyan government following the attack on the Kuwaiti embassy in Tripoli.

All newspapers report that on March 30 the Kuwaiti stock exchange reached its highest level since 1997.

Editorials:

**3.** "Are the Arabs With Us or Against Us?" Liberal Kuwait University Political Science Professor, Dr. Ahmad Al-Baghdadi, wrote in independent Al-Seyassah (3/31): "Whether we like it or not, we will never belong to the Western world, either in intellectual or religious identification. Kuwaitis are Arabs. Yet, Arabism is more a daily curse than a way of life. Arabs are psychologically,

militarily, culturally, and scientifically incapable of confronting Israel, therefore, they attack America. Arabs are also incapable of deterring America's just war against the criminal Iraqi regime, therefore, they attack Kuwait knowing fully that it is not the only country offering assistance to the United States. We would accept this [Arab position] if it was peaceful, because freedom of expression is a right. Yet, attacking our children and our institutions similar to what happened in Libya, Lebanon and Jordan is proof of Arab barbarianism that is incapable of civilization. We should call for the withdrawal of our Ambassadors, and the end of financial aid to any regime that aggresses against us."

14. Liberal Editor-in-Chief of Al-Qabas, Waleed Al-Nesf, wrote (4/1): "In these difficult times, voices are calling to suspend our diplomatic relations with and to ban financial assistance to some Arab nations. Kuwait's higher interests call for careful deliberation of any decision. We do not offer assistance to the needy in order to gain their political support. Our relations are based on the belief that we are an Arab country that belongs to the Arab Nation. We have to maintain our principles despite the psychological pressure [on us]."

15. "Not with America and Not Against Iraq"  
Jaber Al-Hajiri wrote in independent Al-Qabas (4/1): "The US and Kuwait's interests may be intertwined, but permanent [shared] interests with a superpower are not possible in today's world. Therefore, we should not fully throw our weight behind the US because we are not against Iraq as a nation or people, and we are also not with America with all its faces."

16. "Discrepancies Between the Allies"  
Conservative Dr. Sami Khalifa wrote in independent Al-Rai Al-Aam (3/30): "[I]t appears that the British are more sensitive to the people in the region. British Prime Minister Blair adopted the 'Road Map' plan at the same time as the start of the war. Moreover, the British MP [Jack] Straw admitted that the West practices double standards towards Iraq and Israel. These two examples indicate to us that Britain's way of dealing with the war. is different from the American way. It also proves that the US disregards the values of the people in the region where arrogance has become an American characteristic."

17. "Ahmad Saeed's Satellite Channel"  
[Ahmad Saeed is an Egyptian newscaster who announced during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war that Arab forces shot down 300 Israeli fighter planes]  
Liberal, prominent lawyer Hassan Al-Essa wrote in independent Al-Qabas (4/2): "It was a wise decision by the Ministry of Information to give a warning to Al-Arabiya satellite channel. This satellite channel was established to compete with Al-Jazeera. and broadcasts radical statements about the war on Iraq. Such satellite channels are copies of Ahmad Saeed's microphone and reminds us of the illusions of victory during the 1967 war."

18. "The Worst-Case Scenario After the Failure of the 'Shock and Awe' Campaign"  
Radical Islamist Mohammad Al-Mulaifi wrote in independent Al-Seyassah (4/2): "Two weeks after the war campaign on Iraq, one can conclude that the American military strategy has failed because Saddam's troops are still absorbing the strikes. In this situation, we will witness the worst-case scenario of fighting inside Baghdad. American forces may lose the battle for many reasons: 1) Iraqis in Baghdad know their land and environment very well; 2) the fighting in Baghdad will be measured by meters, not kilometers, and each meter may cost the life of soldiers; and 3) the American army may face a situation similar to what the Israelis faced in Lebanon, meaning suicide attacks on their troops."

19. "It is a Different War"  
Ahmad Al-Dayeen, former Secretary-General of the Kuwait Democratic Forum, wrote in independent Al-Rai Al-Aam (4/2): "It was supposed to be a swift war. but the war is going into its third week. It was supposed to avoid civilians, but they were the victims. The war was supposed to take into consideration the role of the opposition parties, but they have been totally ignored. A coup was expected by one of Saddam's aids, but this day never came. They called it 'the freedom of Iraq' war, but the first thing they did was to raise the American flag in Umm Qasr. This war is a different war. It is completely different from the war to liberate Iraq."